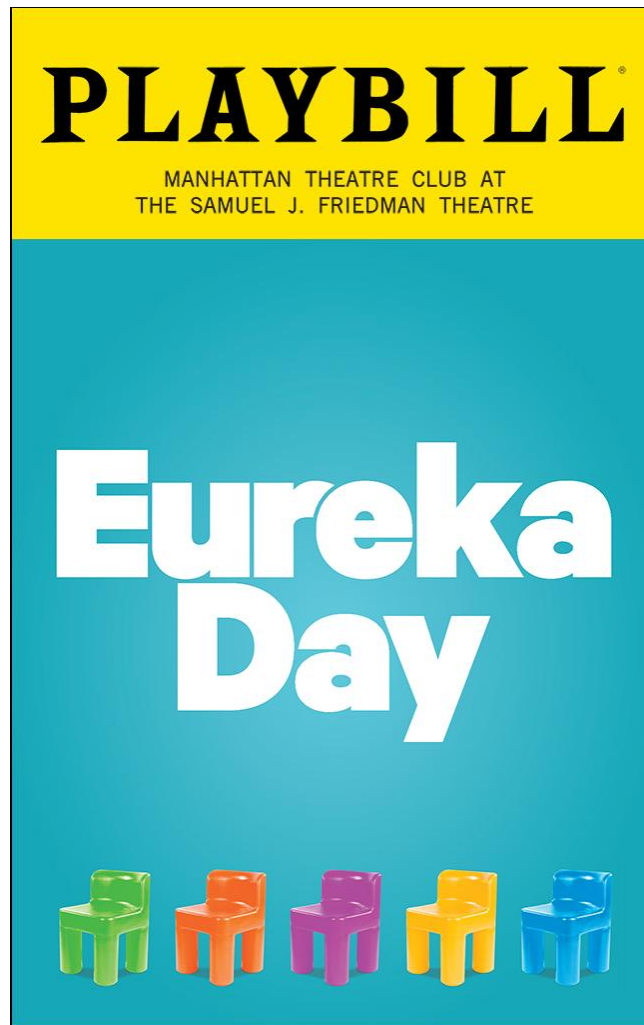




**Lights Up! Library
Classroom Activities**

Eureka Day
By Jonathan Spector
Directed by Anna D. Shapiro



INTRODUCTION

Thank you for bringing Manhattan Theatre Club's Lights Up! Library initiative into your high school classroom! We're thrilled to provide to you and your students these classroom activities and the performing recording of *Eureka Day* by Jonathan Spector.

Our goals for this initiative are:

- To help students better understand themselves and the world through the medium of theatre
- To help develop a knowledgeable, perceptive new audience for the theatre and for the arts in general
- To stimulate participants' imaginations, creativity, and critical thinking skills through engagement with challenging theatre works

The activities are divided into three sections:

- **Preparing Students to View the Play** — activities may include classroom discussion prompts, writing prompts, and theatre games or improvisations
- **Viewing the Play** — including questions for classroom discussion after students watch the performance
- **Follow-Up Activities** — further activities intended to deepen students' personal and intellectual interactions with the play

Additionally, [click here](#) to access supplemental resources which may include links to articles and videos meant to bring further context to this experience.

Our hope is that you will have the time to activate all the activities in this document; however, we understand that time is among the scarcest resources in a high school classroom. One could maintain a rich experience by engaging in the framing questions, one preparatory activity, post-show questions, and one follow-up exercise. And, of course, please modify these activities — or devise your own — in any way necessary to meet the needs of each student in your classroom.

Some of the activities you'll find on these pages align to the [National Core Arts Standards for Theatre](#), and most will align to your local benchmarks and standards.

We hope that this experience will be enriching and educationally beneficial to your students!



ABOUT MANHATTAN THEATRE CLUB

Manhattan Theatre Club is a not-for-profit theatre company that produces a season of bold, entertaining, and thought-provoking new plays and musicals both on Broadway and off-Broadway. It's Learning & Community Engagement program creates experiences that empower learners to engage joyfully and authentically with theatre while championing the organization's commitment to share the work on its stages with the widest possible audience.

To learn more about Manhattan Theatre Club, click [here](#).

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Manhattan Theatre Club's production of Jonathan Spector's *Eureka Day* opened on December 16, 2024, at the Samuel J. Friedman Theatre. It was directed by Anna D. Shapiro. The cast included Amber Gray, Jessica Hecht, Bill Irwin, Thomas Middleditch, and Chelsea Yakura-Kurtz. The set was designed by Todd Rosenthal; costumes were by Clint Ramos; lighting design was by Jen Schriever; original music and sound design were by Rob Milburn and Michael Bodeen; projection design was by David Bengali.

CHARACTERS AND SETTING

SUZANNE: Mid-50s. White. Warm and Gracious. Moved to Berkeley after college when her then boyfriend now-husband started graduate school at UC Berkeley. Raising her family and nurturing the school are her life's work, and fully entwined. Once her youngest was in school she started working part-time as a life-coach, after being encouraged to it by so many friends who she'd helped through difficult times. Has a home worth four million dollars (though she'll tell you it was much much much cheaper when they bought), but thinks of herself as "comfortable" rather than "wealthy." Mother of Sebastian, Arlo, Izzy, Juniper, Tompkins, and Walden.

DON: Early 60s. White. Head of school. A calming presence. Has worked hard to become the man he is. From New England, moved to Berkeley in the mid-80s chasing the last gasp of hippie dom. Started in education as a music teacher, and on difficult days fantasizes about going back to it. Has lived with his partner in the same rented In-Law unit for 25 years. She makes pottery. They do silent meditation retreats at Esalen three times a year. No kids.

CARINA: Early 40s, Black. A joiner. Her parents were in the Foreign Service. She grew up overseas and had gone to eight different schools by the time she graduated from high school. This made her skilled at landing in a new environment, figuring out the rules, and



putting other people at ease. Her wife is from the Berkeley and always wanted to come back, so they moved nine months ago from the East Coast. Isn't sure how much she loves living here, but is working hard to convince herself she does, because her wife never wants to leave. She's worked for non-profits her whole professional life, so has spent A LOT of time in board meetings. And dealing with well-intentioned white people. Mother of Victor.

MEIKO: Mid-30s, Biracial Japanese/White (describes herself as Hapa). Berkeley native. Wry sense of humor. Went to UC Berkeley and has never lived anywhere else, or wanted to. A landscape architect, which she's good at but a little bored by. A year after the end of a tortured on again off-again eight-year relationship, became a single mother by choice, of Olivia. When her daughter was young, Meiko's mother was effectively a co-parent, but less so now. Would like to have another child, but feels like she's too old to think about doing it alone, again.

ELI: Mid-30s, White. Jewish or half-Jewish. Oblivious but well-meaning. From Southern California, went to Stanford and then straight into working at a tech start-up. Cashed out three years ago, and has been in search of how to occupy his time and exercise his mind. An expert pickler, competitive rock climber, manager of family wealth. Went through an intense Ayn Rand phase in college, which now fills him with shame, but which he has also never fully shaken. When he and his wife first decided to open up their marriage, they spent many hours in therapy making sure they were approaching it in a thoughtful and intentional way. But that was a long time ago. Father of Tobias.

WINTER: 30s – 50s, Person of Color. A parent. This is a walk-on role with no lines. Can be played by an understudy or production assistant.

SETTING: The Eureka Day School, Berkeley, California.

TIME: Fall 2018

PREPARING STUDENTS TO VIEW THE PLAY

FRAMING QUESTIONS

Either through classroom discussion or individual journaling, ask students to reflect upon these questions:

- What factors shape someone's deeply held points of view, opinions, or paradigms?
- How do people navigate opposition within and between these beliefs?
- Is consensus actually possible?
- What might a world in which opposing sides are fully heard and respected look like?

ACTIVITY: MINUTE LISTS

Ask students to brainstorm responses to each of the below prompts. Give them one or two minutes to write down as many responses as possible.

- Places you feel safe
- Elements you would want to see in community agreements (classroom, workplace, community group, etc.)
- Topics you feel strongly about
- Their closely and deeply held beliefs

In a classroom discussion, invite students to share items from their list and record these for the class to reference later. Encourage students to add ideas from classmates to their own lists in the process.

ACTIVITY: YES / NO

This simple improvisation game uses only “Yes” and “No” to explore tactical choices made in pursuit of an objective.

Divide students into pairs. One student will take the role of Player A, the other of Player B. Player A may only say “Yes.” Player B may only say “No.” Player A’s objective is to convince Player B to say “Yes.” To achieve their goal, Player A must try a wide variety of tactical choices until one finally works.

Call up pairs to play the scenario in front of the class. After each pair exhausts their tactical choices, reflect with students on what they experienced.

- What different tactics did Player A try to pursue their objective, and how did Player B's responses influence those choices?
- Which tactics seemed most effective (or ineffective), and what evidence from the performance supports that thinking?
- Think about a time when you were trying to achieve a goal with another person. How does this activity change or deepen your understanding of how people adjust their strategies when one approach isn't working?

ACTIVITY: DUELING MONOLOGUES

Ask students to create a character using the [Character Profile Form](#) as a guide. This character may be close to them, they may be diametrically opposite, or somewhere in between.

Then, ask students to select a topic or belief they feel strongly about. This could come from the list they generated themselves in the Minute List activity, another student's contribution to the earlier class discussion, or something entirely new.

Give students ten minutes to write a monologue as the character they developed that clearly and convincingly articulating their point of view about this topic or belief.

Then, ask students to create a new character using the Character Profile Form as a guide. Again, this character may be close to them, they may be diametrically opposite, or somewhere in between.

Once the second characters have been created, give students ten minutes to write a monologue as this new character articulating a fundamentally opposing view to that of the monologue they previously wrote.

Due to the likely personal nature of this writing, students should be reminded that sharing their monologues is not required.

Facilitate a group discussion that reflects upon the experience of working from both sides of an argument. Ask: How might different life experiences shape opposing opinions or perspectives?

ACTIVITY: SCENE WRITING

Place students into groups of three or four. Ask each group to select a safe space from their Minute Lists and to decide on a group that functions within that space. Next, students should use the [Character Profile Form](#) to create two distinctive characters who are members of this group and to clearly define their relationship. The characters should share a common goal, but have a strong disagreement about how to achieve it.

Share this writing prompt: Two people share a common goal within a group that functions within a safe space. They strongly disagree about how to achieve that goal. Does one viewpoint prevail, do they reach consensus, or do they end in a stalemate?

Provide these additional parameters:

- One of the two characters must have had a formative experience that deeply shapes their perspective.
- Clearly define the safe space in the exposition of the scene.
- Include a time constraint for the scene which requires a conclusion.
- Ensure a fair hearing so that the audience cannot determine the playwright's position on the goal.

When students finish writing, ask them to cast their scene using their classmates. View readings of the scenes, pausing after each scene to ask the audience what they noticed.

After viewing all scenes, transition to a large group discussion using the below questions.

Questions for students as playwrights:

- What choices did you make to establish the safe space, and how did that setting influence the characters' disagreement?
- Which moment in your scene most challenged your own assumptions about the issue being debated? What made that moment powerful?

Questions for students as audience:

- How did each character's formative experience influence the tactics they used and the position they defended?
- How successfully did the scenes give both viewpoints a fair hearing? What specific writing choices helped you understand each character's perspective?
- After seeing several scenes, what did you discover about how groups make difficult decisions when people share the same goal but disagree about the path forward?

VIEWING THE PLAY

You'll receive a link and password to the performance recording of the play on the first weekday of the month for which you registered to view the play. The recording may be viewed only during regularly scheduled class time in classrooms or assembly spaces on your campus. Viewing credentials may not be shared with students for individual viewing at home or on social media.

You may wish to assign each student to "track" a character during the performance using a [Character Profile Form](#).

CLASS DISCUSSION

After viewing the play, use these questions to facilitate a class discussion about the theatergoing experience:

- What moments in the production were particularly vivid and powerful? These could be lines of dialogue, moments between characters, design elements, etc.
- What was surprising?
- What was confusing to you?
- What were the pivotal moments in the play?
- What responsibility does an individual hold when their belief impacts a community?
- Have you experienced a similar social dynamic to those presented in this play?
- How might the conflicts observed in this play happen in our community?
- Why do you think the playwright structured the play in the way they did?
- How did race, gender, class, or culture shape the conflicts in the play?
- What remains unresolved in the play?
- Which character changed the most from beginning to end?
- Did the play challenge your thinking? How?

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

DRAWING CONNECTIONS

How does this play connect to the world around us?

Individually or in small groups, ask students to find an article, news feature, interview, or other recent artifact from current events that reflects one of the play's themes or ideas. Then, have students share and discuss:

- Why is this theme or idea relevant today?
- Have they encountered the theme or idea in other artistic mediums or media?
- Does this new information alter your personal response to the production? If so, how?

What did we discover?

Ask each student to identify a topic in the play with which they were previously unfamiliar. The student should gather as much information as they can on this subject and share with the class. Sources could include articles, news features, videos, interviews, or other relevant



artifacts. Guide students through the compilation of research and the structure of the sharing as best appropriate for your subject area and curricular goals.

FEEDBACK FOR MTC

We appreciate that you chose to bring Manhattan Theatre Club's production of *Eureka Day* into your classroom, and we hope that your students had a great experience with these activities and the play.

You'll receive an email at the end of the month in which your class had access to the performance recording. Please complete the Lights Up! Library Feedback Form linked in that email so that we can continue to improve this initiative.